

Dec 28, 1983

First of all, let me thank you all for your Christmas Presents to us. It was a lovely Christmas except for the fact that I got sick. (My first cold since coming home). I have had Intestinal Flu and some other problems since July, but this was my first sore-throat, head cold, drippy, messy, old-fashioned cold. Yuuck.

I wish you all could have been at our family Christmas party. I am not complaining, mind you. I feel fortunate that so many of our children and grandchildren are here and we can see them. Not as often as we should—nearness lets us be careless, I suppose, because we know they are there, and that we can see them anytime, and perhaps as a result we become complacent and don't see them as often as we should.

I think we all had fun. We had roasted chicken breasts (I got boned chicken breasts from the Beehive Poultry in Salt Lake) (You remember our stop there, Virginia?) rice, a green and a red jello salad, rolls, and because I got behind, Nancy, bless her heart, made the pies. She made five pumpkin chiffon and one lemon chiffon—just like she did for our Thanksgiving. I had wanted to do this one all by ourselves and not have to involve the other girls in the food, because I knew that they were all going to be up to their necks in Christmas preparations.

(That may be one reason Nancy didn't get your Christmas off to you, Liz,

Charlotte was here and she was a help, too. We started at 5:30, had dinner and then each family gave a part on our program. Carli Anne sang "Santa Claus is too fat for the chimney.", Hannah and Sarah sang a song. Karen played for her family while they sang, and then we all joined in singing the same song when they were through. Betsy was going to sing a solo. We called on their family first (seniority, you know) and she said, "Wait for me until the last, as I've eaten too much. She ended up not singing, but Tracy and the rest of the kids sang, and we all joined in. We have some nice voices both in the adults and the children, and the grandchildren all show signs of having good "ears" and being able to carry a tune well. It was lovely.

Then, to give out the presents, I told a story about the "Bear's Christmas." I gave all the kids in the local area who were under 6 great big bears in pink and blue and beige and light brown. There were six big bears and three little bears. I went down to DI's (I am learning some good things from Betsy) and for 50 cents each dressed the bears. There were five girl bears and one boy bear, and I thought I could find pajamas for the boy bear, but had to end up making them. I was able to find two aprons which with a little adjusting fit the bears and ~~xx~~ which had pockets in which I could put two of the little bears. The third little bear, I put on the back of one of the girl bears like the mothers do in Zimbabwe. Then I had Mary and Susannah and Carli Anne, and Robert, and Alex, and Michael pantomime the story holding the bears in front of them like puppets as I told the story.

Part of the story was finding a child to love and be loved by the bears, which healed the broken hearts of the bears (red construction paper). The children taking the part of the bears took the bears to the children who were receiving them. The little bears went to the babies, Barbara, Spencer, and Hyrum, who are growing like crazy. In fact Spencer is walking around now and is no longer a baby. Then we passed out the money. I had gotten new ten dollar bills from the bank in \$100. packets marked "The millionaire's scratch pad." Ha. The children who got the big bears were Hannah, Sarah, Elizabeth (Tracy's), Chelsey Kae, Anthony, and Emily (David's). I used the children in the play who were nearest the six year old dividing line so that they would not feel left out of the "bear" act. Daddy then passed out the money to the couples. You who were away at least shared in that part of the

party, except that I told the mother's to get something for the little ones. (Except I forgot to tell Elizabeth to get something to go under the tree for John.) The rest of the kids I thought would just as soon have the money to buy what they want.

The final part of our party was a treasure hunt. I divided the children over 6 (10 of them) into two teams and had them go through the house looking for the clues, and then they finally returned to the Christmas tree where we had hung little bags (made out of the Christmas dress that I made out of the material which Sherlene brought back from her mission. They were filled with candy and a silver (?not silver) dollar.

I reserve the option to change my mind at any time, but we have decided that we will send money to you for your birthdays. Somehow I have a hard time when the birthday comes thinking I am really sending you a birthday present when you have been getting a magazine every month. I will let you subscribe to your own magazines. Out, if you wish, of the money I send you. By now you have all reached the economic level that you can buy the magazines you want for yourselves, anyway.

Several of you sent me books, which I have read avidly during my "lay up" with the cold. It is getting better now.

I wonder if there will ever be a time in the rest of our lives when both of us will be healthy at the same time. It sure hasn't been that way since we came home from our mission. It's dangerous to go on a mission, unless you go right back while you are still well. I have received letters from several couples who were in the MTC with us who have had surgeries and illness since returning.

They all say: "We were so well when we were on our mission." That's not always the case, though. One couple in So. Africa had to come home early. The ~~wife~~ contracted cancer. She died soon after they got home. Before we left So. Africa, we heard that he had remarried, and wanted to come back and finish the mission.

Thank you all for sending the money for Grand-dad's flowers. I try not to think about his being gone. He is so much happier there. The flowers were beautiful, but I think I told you about that in the last Hallmanack.

Uncle Wendell came home ^{just before Christmas} for heart tests. They found he had had one heart attack, and that the smallest vein in his heart was blocked, but was already rerouting of its own accord, and told him he could decide whether to stay here or to return—but that they felt surgery was not called for. He will go back (with Merrill, who came with him) on Thursday, Dec 29.

We are certainly having a WHITE Christmas. And we will certainly have a wet spring. Maybe the Lord will float us back to Missouri. All the public officials are worrying about what they are going to do with and about the spring run off. It is at least 14 inches deep outside where it is not stacked up from road clearance. The radio is warning people to remove the snow from roofs, especially old roofs which might not be as strong. We sold the Subaru for \$2900. The lady who bought it works for Dr. Ridge. She lives in Alpine and says she's the only one on her block who doesn't get stuck in the snow. We decided it was ridiculous to maintain the insurance and upkeep on all those cars. We now have the truck up for sale, too. The old blue Chev. Truck.

P.S. I think it's time for one of Daddy's classics. I will see if I can get him to do the next letter.

Luv Ya and Happy New Year,
Mom

all the children came home to see them & Daddy from summer